

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Bath Elementary School
Chris Renner, Principal

Build your child's research skills—and love of reading

Sometimes, going beyond the book is just what your child needs to amp up her love of reading. Does your child have a favorite book? Take her to the library or use your computer to research:

- **The setting.** Is the book set in a real town? Have your child look up information about the town. Was it accurately portrayed, or were aspects of it changed?
- **The main character.** Was the main character based on a real person? Try to find a biography of the person. How did the book differ from reality?
- **The author.** Encourage your child to put herself in the author's shoes. What other books has the author written? What does the author most like to write about? Why does your child think the author enjoys that subject?



“A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say.”

—Italo Calvino

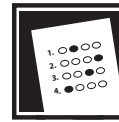
Get the most out of all reading assignments

Your child will have to read about many subjects in school—from history to science to math and more. No matter what kind of text he's reading, encourage him to:

- **Consider what he already knows** about the topic—and what he expects to learn.
- **Scan key material**, especially the introduction, headings and summary.
- **Notice pictures**, including illustrations and charts.
- **Read the assignment** in small parts. Talk about confusing words or sections.
- **Jot down and review** a few important points from each part of the reading.

Source: Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D. and Gerald E. Schumm, Jr., D. Min., *The Reading Tutor's Handbook*, ISBN: 1-57542-052-X (Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., www.freespirit.com).

Urge careful reading on tests



Reading skills are critical to doing well on tests. That's because no matter how much a child knows, he can't do well unless he reads questions correctly. Talk with your child about this—without putting pressure on him. Suggest that he highlight or underline key words, such as in the question “An antonym is an opposite. What is an antonym for happy?” Taking practice tests at home can help grow these skills.

Try kid-generated critiques



What do other rookie readers think of that book you're about to pick up for your child? Find out at Spaghetti Book Club (www.spaghettibookclub.org). Filled with reviews “by kids for kids,” it's a terrific—and free—resource!

How-to books can make reading even more rewarding



When kids struggle with reading, they may need a little extra motivation to open a book. How-to books can help! The trick is to consider your child's hobbies. If she loves cooking, for example, find a kids' cookbook with basic instructions and beautiful pictures. A child who loves crafts won't be able to resist a collection of simple, at-home activities. An athletic child might enjoy a book on how to improve her skills. Stay nearby to help—and to compliment the results!

Add books to your child's breakfast menu

One of the best ways to build your child's language skills is to read together every day. But some parents say nighttime exhaustion interferes with their reading routine. A fun alternative is having "books for breakfast." In addition to serving a healthy meal, read a book aloud while your child eats. This takes a little planning (you'll have to choose appealing foods and books), but the payoff is huge! Your child will start the day nourished—physically and academically.

Source: Esmé Raji Codell, *How to Get Your Child to Love Reading*, ISBN: 1-56512-308-5 (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, www.workman.com/algonquin).

A secret code can boost writing and reasoning skills

Kids love secrets. So turn that love of secrets into a love of writing by encouraging your child to invent and use a secret code. A code is a system of symbols that can only be understood by people who learn it—just like the alphabet! Two codes your child might try are:

1. **"Skip One."** Replace each letter with the one following it in the alphabet. B stands for A, C for B, and so on. "Meet me outside" would be "Nffu nf pvutjef."
2. **"Capital Letters."** Write a sentence containing a few proper nouns. The capital letters spell out the hidden message. For example, "Rob visited Enid's Aunt Doris" would mean "Read."



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For even more security, have your child use lemon juice to write invisible messages. Juice a lemon and add water to the juice until it is almost clear. Dip a cotton swab or toothpick into the "ink" to write with. Let the "ink" dry and send the note. To see the message, hold the paper up to a lamp (but not too close to the bulb).

Source: Julie Williams, "Invent a Secret Code!" education.com, www.education.com/activity/article/invent_a_secret_code.



Q: I want my child to do well in reading. How can I get my child to read *without nagging all the time*?

A: You're right that it's important to keep a positive attitude about reading. You want to encourage it—without making it seem like a chore. Start by replacing any negative words ("You have to read well or you'll fail.") with positive talk and daily activities ("Reading is incredible. It can help us learn about almost anything! Let's think of something really cool to read about this week.").

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.



For lower elementary readers:

Yes Day! by Amy Krouse Rosenthal (HarperCollins). Follow an unnamed narrator as adults say yes to his every request.

Flat Stanley's Worldwide Adventures #1: The Mount Rushmore Calamity by Jeff Brown (HarperCollins). The amusing Flat Stanley series is back! Now readers can visit the Wild West with Stanley and his family.

For upper elementary readers:

Everything for a Dog by Ann M. Martin (Feiwel & Friends). Animal lovers may be especially touched by this tale, which connects its characters through several stories.

Toby Alone by Timothee de Fombelle (Candlewick). Toby Lolness is only one and a half millimeters tall—but he has a big job to do. Can Toby save his family and his entire society from destruction?

Visit the library—alone?



Kids need to visit the library regularly. But parents benefit from going alone, too. Then they can:

1. **Check out adult books.** By reading at home, you set a good example for your child.
2. **Browse in the kids' section.** Concentrate on finding books that match your child's interests.
3. **Talk with the librarian privately.** Discuss your child's reading strengths and weaknesses. What materials does the librarian suggest for her?

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Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302

www.parent-institute.com